

FACTORING CLIMATE CHANGE INTO THE CHERRY POINT PROPOSAL

If SSA Marine is allowed to build its proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal at Cherry Point, the terminal would be the largest dry bulk goods export-import terminal on the West Coast of the United States. Coal is only one of the dry goods that SSA Marine hopes to ship from this terminal, but it is the one that is causing the most concern due to the impact of greenhouse gases on global climate change. As public discussion begins about what topics should be included in the scope for the federal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), these issues will come into play.

What is climate change?

Climate change is the long-term change of global weather patterns. Since 1900, the global average temperature has risen by 0.6 degrees Celsius (1.1 degrees Fahrenheit), according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which is the most authoritative scientific source on climate change.

What are greenhouse gases?

The earth's atmosphere is made of gases that trap the sun's warmth and sustain life on earth. Since 1900, the burning of fossil fuels has rapidly increased the emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. This increase in greenhouse gases contributes to global warming, which is one aspect of climate change.

What are fossil fuels?

Coal | Petroleum Oil | Natural Gas

If it is built, the Gateway Pacific Terminal will be used to ship coal to China, South Korea, and other industrializing countries in Asia, where burning coal is a major source of electricity.

How important is coal to energy production worldwide?

According to the United Nations, coal supplies more than 50 percent of the world's energy needs. Historically, coal has been widely used for electricity generation because its price is often lower than the fluctuating price of oil and natural gas. Countries such as China and India are building their new industrial facilities based on coal. SSA Marine wants to build the Gateway Pacific Terminal so it can ship coal from existing and new mines in the Powder River Basin located in Wyoming and Colorado to growing markets in Asia.

What are the climate change effects of the transport and the burning of coal?

The Kyoto Protocol (1997) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change identifies carbon dioxide as the primary greenhouse gas that is contributing to climate change. Human activities, such as burning fossil fuels (particularly coal) to generate electricity or to fuel factories, and changes in land use, are contributing to the release of large amounts of carbon in the atmosphere causing carbon dioxide levels to rise. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that today the atmosphere contains approximately 40 percent more carbon dioxide than it did at the start of the industrial era.

How do carbon dioxide emissions from burning coal compare to other energy sources?

According to the EPA, to generate the same amount of energy the average coal-fired power plant emits 1.3 times more carbon dioxide than the average petroleum oil-fired power plant and 2 times more carbon dioxide than the average natural gas-fired power plant. Carbon dioxide emissions from hydro-electric power, nuclear power, solar power, and wind power plants are negligible (although they have other environmental impacts or limitations).



The EIS for the Gateway Pacific Project, which is scheduled to begin this fall, is a multi-year process in which the permitting agencies will evaluate and determine the significance of the potential impacts of the proposed terminal.

Can climate change be considered a possible environmental impact of the proposed terminal?

Yes. Two years ago, the Obama Administration called on federal agencies to consider as part of all EIS processes whether proposed developments would cause an increase in greenhouse gas emissions and affect climate change.

The Obama Administration said that:

- New developments should not exacerbate the problem of climate change
- Analyses should be based on the best available science, not speculation
- Federal environmental laws should be used to reduce the potential increase of greenhouse gas emissions that could lead to climate change

Will climate change be raised as an issue in the EIS for the proposed terminal at Cherry Point?

Yes. Many groups including the Lummi Nation will seek to include the issues of climate change and greenhouse gas emissions in the EIS.

Scoping for the EIS is scheduled to begin this fall, and opportunities for public comment will be announced in the Squol Quol, which can be read at the website listed below.

For more information and project updates, please visit the Lummi Nation Awareness Project at www.lnnr.lummi-nsn.gov/LummiWebsite/Website.php?PageID=235

